

The Executive Council Memoranda Collection, 1977-1982

0.9 cubic feet

JPL 221

History

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory's (JPL) Executive Council was established in an interoffice memo from JPL Director William H. Pickering to the Senior Staff on February 14, 1963. The roles of the Executive Council were to formulate the major policies of the Laboratory, develop long range and intermediate range plans for attaining the objectives of the Laboratory, recommend to the Director preferable courses of action, periodically review with the Director the status of existing and proposed major projects, and coordinate major actions of the Laboratory. The Executive Council also was established to provide an executive forum that would be concerned with any matter that might significantly affect the welfare of the Laboratory and its activities. The Council was intended as a high level advisory and consulting group to the Laboratory Director. It was not empowered to make decisions, but to directly and actively assist and support the Director on the burdens and obligations of his office.

The permanent membership of the Council was established in 1963 as consisting of eight people: the Laboratory Director, Deputy Director, and the various Assistant Laboratory Directors (ALDs). The Staff Assistant to the Director served as Secretary, and was informally in charge of keeping records of meetings and correspondence. The makeup of the Executive Council has changed through the years, with retirements, laboratory reorganizations and changes in priorities.

The presence of the JPL Executive Council was one sign that JPL was outgrowing the time when one person, the Laboratory Director, could effectively administer the lab as a whole. By the beginning of the 1980s, the Executive Council itself was split into three committees to effectively administer the lab.

Provenance

There is no formal recorded provenance. Internal evidence implies that part of the original accession came from the Public Affairs Office, and part came from the Office of the Director. The collection was transferred from the Laboratory Records Center to the JPL Archives in early 1994.

Collection Arrangement and Description

The collection is comprised of memoranda addressed to members of the Executive Council. The memoranda include correspondence, reports and technical memoranda. Also present in the collection are handwritten notes, written apparently by Frank J. Colella, Manager of the JPL Public Affairs Office (Section 180). The materials appear to have been collected and sometimes annotated by Colella. The memoranda primarily represent correspondence addressed to one member of the Executive Council that were forwarded to the rest, or were addressed to the Executive Council in general. There are no meeting minutes or agendas of Executive Council meetings in the collection. Researchers interested in documentation of meetings of the Executive Council should consult collections JPL 150, JPL 165 and JPL 229. The collection is arranged chronologically.

The first folder is made up of handwritten notes by Colella, taken during the meetings. They report on various events, such as the note for the September 15, 1977 meeting where Bruce Murray announced that Seasat-B was being cancelled. Alan Lovelace from NASA told Murray that the mission would have triggered a battle between NASA, DOD and NOAA. The Shuttle Imaging Radar experiment (SIR) was approved, and the Lunar Polar Orbiter might be in the budget as well. The NASA budget was being submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) with the LPO in, but Murray expected it to get cut out. Murray also reported that newly appointed NASA Administrator Robert Frosch did not seem to be around much. It was noted that Frosch appeared to be smart, but very cautious, and stayed away from controversial budget items.

Included are copies of congratulatory letters sent to Voyager Project Manager Robert Parks and Voyager Project Scientist Edward C. Stone from U.S. President Jimmy Carter after the Voyager 1 Jupiter encounter, dated March 7, 1979. Another White House letter, dated January 13, 1982, was sent to John C.

Beckman from Counsellor to the President Edwin Meese III, regarding Beckman's letter of concern about the possible cancellation of the Galileo project and potential dissolution of JPL.

A memo dated December 4, 1979 from Al Hibbs to the Executive Council discussed upcoming meetings regarding solar sailing and interstellar travel. Bruce Murray's interest in what was called "Gossamer Spacecraft" had been stimulated by a series of articles written by Freeman Dyson that were published in the *New Yorker*. Murray contacted Dyson, and organized a meeting on Gossamer Spacecraft as well as another on the feasibility of sending an instrumented probe to another star on a schedule that would return useful data within 20 or 30 years after launching. Included as attachments are the agendas of each meeting, as well as a list of attendees.

The meeting minutes and presentation material from a joint meeting of the NASA Council and NASA Center Directors held on December 11-13, 1979 is in the collection, as an attachment to a memo dated January 23, 1980. The presentation material focused on the Space Shuttle program, and discussed the readiness of the Space Shuttle orbiter vehicles.

A memo dated February 5, 1980 from Jack N. James to the Executive Council has as an attachment a study for a planetary program exploration over the next fifteen years. An ambitious planetary program was planned, with orbiters sent out to every planet, and landers or atmospheric probes sent to Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Titan. The program emphasized the reconnaissance and exploration of the Solar System, with future goals of utilization with manned bases. A mission to study Halley's Comet was emphasized also in a November 1980 NASA Technical Memorandum, "Comet Science Working Group Report on the Halley Intercept Mission."

Reports from various JPL managerial personnel who returned from year-long sabbaticals are also in the collection. Donald G. Rea went to Harvard and John R. Scull went to Stanford. Both reported that the sabbaticals were beneficial and justified the costs paid by JPL. Scull recommended that a "sabbatical" policy be established for all senior members of the Laboratory management. Rea's report was dated October 3, 1980, and Scull's was dated September 27, 1980.

A letter from John R. Pierce to Distribution, later forwarded to the Executive Council, dated January 13, 1982, reported that Pierce had talked with George Mueller about the Space Station Committee. The justifications for the Space Station, as Mueller saw them, leaned heavily towards defense. The Russians had a habitat in space and people believed they would construct a major facility, probably to put weapons in space, with men to control them. Mueller also stated that an economic way to put large things in geosynchronous orbit was by an unmanned, reusable ferry from low orbit. Men would be needed to refuel and maintain the ferry. Mueller also personally believed that it would be beneficial for the U.S. to base MX missiles on the Moon. Pierce noted that Mueller had little sympathy from the other committee members regarding this.

Beginning in January 1981 there was concern with a proposed policy from the Office of Federal Procurement Policy of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regarding Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). Murray was concerned that enacting the proposed policy would bring an end to the efficient and effective use of FFRDCs. Murray noted in a February 10, 1981 letter that under the policy, a FFRDC would under no circumstances be able to solicit work from any source, and it would not be able to compete for work. The problems of being a FFRDC are documented in numerous correspondence in the collection in 1981 and 1982.

A December 18, 1981 letter from Bruce Murray notified NASA Deputy Administrator Hans Mark of his concerns. Murray believed that it seriously threatened the plans of JPL assisting the Department of Defense. Murray believed that many agencies using JPL believed that they had the legal authority to do so under interagency agreements that were exempt from the procurement-oriented sole source procedure. Murray also reported that under the 1978 Memorandum of Understanding between Caltech and NASA for JPL, that JPL was prohibited from competing with for-profit industrial or commercial organizations, but the MOU allowed an exception in cases where JPL had a special competence that would not be brought to bear to solve an important problem.

A January 21, 1982 letter from Mark assured Murray that the NASA staff was working with the OFPP staff to have a second draft much more favorable to the full utilization of JPL and other existing

FFRDCs. A February 9, 1982 letter from Mark assured Murray that although the FFRDC problem could be dealt with in a reasonable fashion. There was enough opposition to the proposed policy to delay it, and even if it were implemented, they could still operate around it.

The last folder contains reports written by JPL Liaison to NASA Headquarters, William Petit, Jr. They are structured as somewhat anecdotal in nature, giving a somewhat behind-the-scenes look at the happenings in Washington D.C. and at NASA HQ. They are by no means complete as only five monthly reports are in the collection for a time period from July 1979 to February 1981.

JPL Discreet materials

4 folders contain documents that are stamped or marked "JPL Discreet" or "SEB Discreet." The original positions of Discreet material in the collection have been marked with separation sheets. The material has been moved to a box at the end of the collection.

Conservation/Preservation

Standard preparations of documents for long term storage were completed.

Separation Statement

The collection was 0.7 cubic feet of an original 4 cubic foot accession (1994-3). The other 3.4 cubic feet of the accession were made into the JPL Public Affairs Office Collection (JPL 215), the Bruce C. Murray Collection (JPL 216), and the Charles H. Terhune, Jr. Collection (JPL 222).

Finding Aids

No other finding aids exist for the collection.

FILE FOLDER LIST

Box 1 of 3

- Fld. 1 Frank J. Colella notes, Executive Council, 1977.
- Fld. 2 Executive Council Memoranda, January-April 1979.
- Fld. 3 May-August 1979.
- Fld. 4 September-December 1979.
- Fld. 5 January-April 1980.
- Fld. 6 May-August 1980.
- Fld. 7 September-December 1980.
- Fld. 8 January-April 1981.

Box 2 of 3

- Fld. 9 Executive Council Memoranda, May-December 1981.
- Fld. 10 January-April 1982.
- Fld. 11 May-December 1982.
- Fld. 12 William H. Petit Reports, 1979-1981.

Box 3 of 3 – JPL Discreet

JPL Discreet materials; 4 folders

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Executive Council Memoranda Collection, 1977-1982
0.9 cubic ft. (16 folders)

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The collection contains JPL Discreet materials.

Finding aid available in the repository.

Tracings

Jet Propulsion Laboratory

Jet Propulsion Laboratory – Executive Council

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Space Transportation System

Venus Orbiting Imaging Radar

Halley Intercept Mission

Voyager

Colella, Frank J., 1921-

Murray, Bruce C., 1931-

James, Jack N., 1920-2001.

Petit, William H.

Parks, Robert J., 1922-

Hibbs, Albert R., 1924-

Victor, Walt, 1922-

Schurmeier, Harris M., 1924-

Frosch, Robert A., 1928-

Lovelace, Alan M., 1929-

Mark, Hans, 1929-

Part of Accession 1994-3.